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ABSTRACT

A study of public awareness of issues in bilingual education was conducted using a random sample of 336 college educated and college-bound adults from 23 states and the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Alaska, continental United States, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Alaska, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Subjects were mailed a 32-item questionnaire with established content validity and reliability. The instrument measures the individual's degree of awareness of sociolinguistic, methodological, psychological, and political issues affecting the implementation of bilingual education in this country. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure each response. Analysis of the data revealed that: (1) ethnic groups tend to respond only to their own basic needs and alienate themselves from issues involved in educational programs for all children, (2) professional groups involved in training and implementation functions of bilingual programs are neither articulate nor knowledgeable about bilingual education principles and practice, (3) educated individuals in the United States are generally monolingual, and (4) parents' awareness of bilingual methodology must be improved in order to involve them in the educational process. It is concluded that in order to avoid developing a value system in the schools that excludes minority participation, advocates, teachers, parents, and administrators must become more knowledgeable about teaching methodology in the various programs offered in the public school systems. (MSE)

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GENERATING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

PART I: PROGRAMMATIC VARIABLES

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Generating Public Awareness of
Bilingual Education in the United States
Part I: Programmatic Variables

INTRODUCTION

A clear and systematic understanding of the intricate set of challenges affecting the education of minorities in the United States is a prerequisite to the successful implementation of educational programs. Since bilingual schooling is one of the instructional alternatives of some linguistic minorities in the country, it is imperative that the public be sufficiently knowledgeable about crucial issues affecting implementation practices in order to provide equal education for children whose limited English proficiency threatens their success in the regular classroom. However, the climate for executing these programs adequately in the American public schools is clouded by the fact that vast segments of the population are unacquainted with minority-related issues in education.

The purpose of the present study is to determine the degree of public cognizance about critical issues affecting the successful enforcement of bilingual programs in the public schools. It is hypothesized that awareness of programmatic issues in bilingual education is significantly lacking among indispensable segments of the population who have direct responsibility in the program implementation

process. The "Bermudez Inventory of Bilingual Issues" was the instrument designed to collect the data used in the present study. Issues such as: (1) choice of classroom language medium, (2) principles of language acquisition, (3) teacher training, (4) school practices and regulations, and (5) the nature and thrust of bilingual programs in the United States are among those included in the instrument. Additional information on the inventory appears later in the study.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The rationale for selecting the four major areas addressed in the "Bermudez Inventory of Bilingual Issues" has been provided by current educational research. The following constructs have been consistently identified as key areas in minority-related educational programs: (1) the use of relevant methodology (Banks, 1984, Cummins, 1981, Jacobson, 1981, Nieto, 1980, Swain, 1981); (2) the psycholinguistic considerations that affect learning (Felker, 1979, Kagan, 1977, Olmedo, 1977, Padilla, 1977); (3) the sociological determinants related to schooling (Aguirre, 1980, Bermudez & Padron, 1985, Diaz Guerrero, 1977, Elias-Olivares, 1982, Fantini, 1982, Fishman, 1979, Gonzalez et al, 1980); and (4) the legal parameters establishing the educational opportunities for minority children (Applewhite, 1979, Banks, 1984, Bermudez, 1984, Cordasco, 1976, del Valle et al, 1979, Teitlebaum et al, 1979).

Since the present study restricts its scope to the

interpretation of the data relative to the methodological component of the "Inventory of Bilingual Issues", attention will be directed to the review of significant research conducted in this area. Three specific aspects of bilingual methodologies were examined through the "Inventory of Bilingual Issues": (1) the nature and thrust of bilingual programs in the U.S.; (2) the language medium used in teaching; and (3) the training requirements for the bilingual classroom. (Refer to Table 1). The following documentation supports the views represented in the inventory:

1. Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, passed in 1968, amended in 1974, and reautorized in 1985, legitimizes bilingual programs in the United States. This legislation promotes the use of languages other than English in the classroom as an effort to expedite the transition to English proficiency without fostering academic retardation. Consequently, bilingual programs in the United States are transitional in nature as their thrust is to exit the child from the program as soon as adequate English proficiency has been attained.

2. Research supports that the use of the child's dominant language as the medium of instruction is the most profitable vehicle to content area instruction. Duran and Enright (1983) in studying the performance of 57 Mexican American bilingual college students on Spanish and English versions of problem solving and reasoning tasks found that bilinguals can be quite effective in transfering cognitive skills from one

Table 1

Inventory of Bilingual Issues: A Taxonomy

FACTOR	Variables	ITEM #	TOTALS
Sociological	Reading in the home language	1	Items 1-8
	Parental involvement	2,4	
	School practices/ regulations	3	
	Bilingualism/ biculturalism	5-8	
Methodological	Nature of program	9	Items 9-16
	Language medium	11,15,16	
	Teacher training/the classroom	10,12-14	
Psychological	Teacher's attitude	17	Items 17-24
	Children's self-concept/abilities	18,19	
	Cultural awareness/ bias	20-23	
	Standardized testing	22	
	Language development	24	
Political	Institutional support	25	Items 25-32
	Bilingualism vs. monolingualism	26,27	
	Prejudice	28,29	
	Legal precedents	30-32	

language to another and that bilinguals are more efficient in performing complex cognitive tasks in their more familiar language. Another significant study by Swain (1975, 1981) compares the Canadian French immersion programs and programs in minority language settings in grades 2-4, based on a theoretical framework of language proficiency. Swain's research concludes that early education in the first language, whether for majority or minority language children, provides a solid basis for academic progress in the second language.

3. Bilingual classrooms offer a more demanding set of circumstances than the regular classroom as the teachers not only have to perform in two languages and understand a variety of cultures in the classroom but also they often serve as a catalyst for the children, for the parents, for the school, and for the community. A widely accepted set of competencies prepared by the Center for Applied Linguistics (1974) through a Title V grant from the U.S. Office of Education establishes eight broad categories as guidelines for the preparation and certification of bilingual teachers: language proficiency, linguistics, culture, instructional methods, curriculum utilization and adaptation, assessment, school-community relations, and supervised teaching. A further requirement of "personal qualities" including awareness, commitment, language and cultural proficiency, and professional ethics contributes to make the expectations for a well trained bilingual teacher overwhelming.

BILINGUAL ISSUES QUESTIONNAIRE

The "Bermudez Inventory of Bilingual Issues" is a 32-item Likert scale questionnaire with an estimated reliability coefficient of 0.91 as measured by the Kuder-Richardson 20 formula. Experts in the field have established its content validity. (See Table 1). All 32 items have significant discriminating power, ranging from 0.298 to 0.632.

The instrument measures the individual's degree of awareness in the areas of sociolinguistics, methodology, psychology, and politics as they affect the implementation of bilingual schooling in the United States. Items in the taxonomy have been selected from researched data supplied by the literature reviewed and provided in the preceding section.

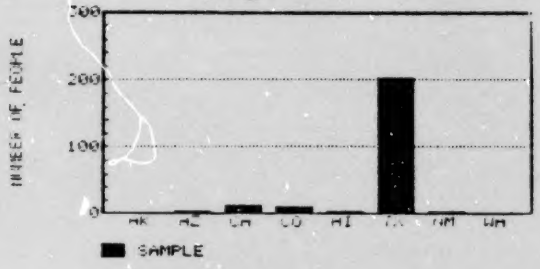
The questionnaires were distributed in person and by mail to a random sample of college-bound and college educated adults from 23 states representing all regions in the continental U.S., the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. A total of 358 cases are reported. (See figs. 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d).

RESULTS

Table 2 reports the F values for all the variables. A One Way Analysis of Variance was used to compare responses across subgroups. When warranted, a Multiple Range Test, using the Student-Neuman-Keuls Procedure, was utilized to

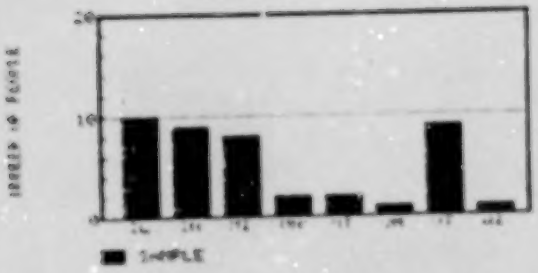
DEMOGRAPHICS

Fig. 1a.



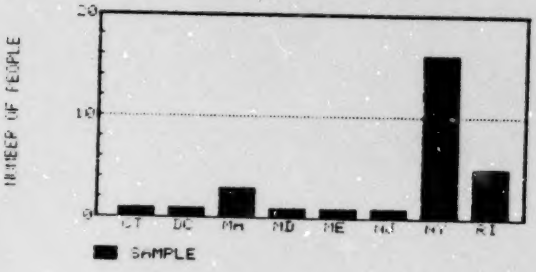
WESTERN U.S., ALASKA AND HAWAII

Fig. 1b.



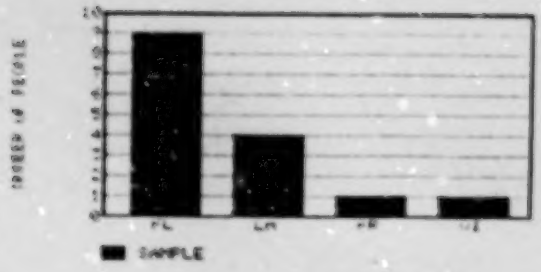
NORTHERN U.S./MIDWEST

Fig. 1c.



EASTERN SEABOARD

Fig. 1d.



SOUTHERN U.S., PUERTO RICO AND VIRGIN IS.

TABLE 2

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
(n=358)

Variable Methodology by:	F RATIO
Ethnicity	13.024***
Professional Background	13.787***
Linguistic Background	31.822***
Family Status	4.105**

*** $p<.001$
** $p<.01$

TABLE 3

STUDENT-NEUMAN-KEULS PROCEDURE
GROUP MEANS BY INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Independent Variable	Mean
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	33.0139
Black	32.8333
Oriental	31.7059
Other	31.5500
Anglo	30.0485
Professional Background	
Certified bilingual teacher	33.4103
Bilingual trainee	32.4857
Other public school personnel	32.0682
Bilingual instructor at IHE	30.6852
None of the above	29.6505
Linguistic Background	
Bilingual (English/Spanish)	32.6792
Bilingual (other)	30.8824
Monolingual	29.1596
Family Status	
Married non-parent	33.2174
Married parent	32.2294
Single non-parent	31.5050
Single parent	30.8667

check for differences between groups. (Refer to Table 3). The following findings were observed:

1. There was a significant effect of ethnicity on the degree of awareness about bilingual methodologies ($p<.001$). Results from the Multiple Range Test further indicated that Hispanics were significantly more informed about bilingual methods than any of the other ethnic groups. Conversely, the Anglo group was significantly less knowledgeable than the other groups tested. All groups measured were significantly different from each other. The group mean of Blacks was higher than that of the Orientals. Since Bilingual Education in the United States is a Civil Rights issue and Blacks have historically been very active politically, they appear to be more sensitive to educational issues regarding minorities than Orientals.

2. There were also significant differences ($p<0.001$) between levels of professional background and awareness of bilingual methodologies. Certified bilingual teachers, for example, seemed to be more knowledgeable than students enrolled in bilingual teacher training programs. This fact seems to support the position that experience, rather than training, has a greater impact on methodological expertise. In addition, certified bilingual teachers differed significantly from other school professional staff (e.g., regular and special education teachers) in their level of awareness about

bilingual methods. These findings seem suggest that there is a lack of communication existing among the different disciplines and entities of learning within the school system itself. A further between group comparison of certified bilingual teachers and instructors at institutions of higher education has shown the latter as being significantly less aware of bilingual methods and practices than the former. This fact seems to point out that there is not enough articulation or consensus between institutions performing teacher preparation tasks --i.e., the universities--and those implementing the bilingual programs--i.e., the districts. This finding is particularly threatening to the effectiveness and continuity of bilingual education as the two critical aspects in the programmatic continuum--i.e., theory and practice--do not seem to be in harmony. In addition, these findings have implications for the nature and thrust of bilingual training programs at the institutions of higher education, indicating a need for a stronger field-based orientation.

3. Linguistic background also seems to affect the degree of awareness of bilingual methodology. A significant difference between groups was found at $p<.001$. A further analysis pointed to the fact that Spanish/English bilinguals are significantly more aware of teaching procedures than other bilinguals. This datum may derive from the fact that most bilingual programs in the country are designed to serve the

Hispanic population since it is the largest conglomerate of speakers of languages other than English in the U.S. However, as expected, bilinguals and monolinguals differed significantly from each other when their expertise in methodology was compared. This finding appears to corroborate a previous conclusion which states that groups remain alienated from educational issues that do not directly affect them. In addition, it is disappointing to observe that only 63.83% of the sample representing seven of the states which reveal the most numerous aggregates of Hispanic populations (U.S. Census, 1980) considered themselves bilingual. This figure seems to suggest that monolingualism is a feature common among educated professionals living in the United States.

4. Methodology by parental status--i.e. married and single parents and married and single non-parents--also showed a significant difference ($p<.01$) in degree of awareness. The Multiple Range Test showed that all groups differ significantly from each other. Parents--both single and married--are significantly less knowledgeable about bilingual methods than the non-parent counterpart. The issue of parental involvement in the educational process of the child has attained critical priority in the funding and implementation processes of bilingual programs (Federal Register, 1985, and Public Law 98-511). The findings of the present study seem to support the low awareness level in the

area of bilingual methodological issues among the parental population of the U.S. indicating that educational programs for parents should be made accessible (Bermudez & Padron, 1985).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The data analyzed in this nationwide study seem to support the following conclusions with reference to bilingual methodology:

1. Ethnic groups tend to live in the confines of their own basic needs and alienate themselves from the total picture of educational programs serving all children.

2. Professional groups involved in the training and implementation aspects of bilingual programs show a lack of articulation and common knowledge about principles and practices of bilingual schooling. This lack of support engenders the demise of this much needed public school program.

3. Being monolingual is a feature commonly present among educated individuals in the U.S. This circumstance seems to promote a lesser understanding of bilingual programs.

4. In order to involve parents in the learning

experience of the bilingual child, their level of awareness about bilingual methodology must be raised.

In view of the preceding statements, it is evident that in order to avoid the perpetration of a hidden curriculum--i.e., a value system operating in the schools which excludes minority participation--advocates, teachers, parents and administrators who support educational equality must become literate in methodological procedures regarding the different programs offered by our public school system. It is not enough to be merely involved in those issues that directly affect us, our family, or our community. Society operates as a holistic system in which all its parts--the individuals--must work in consonance. Hence, the children from the "other side of the tracks"--whichever side that might be--will have a direct impact on the well-being of our total society. In order for the country to prosper, all Americans must have the opportunity to develop their skills and constructive potential. It is only through relevant educational channels that individuals can achieve this goal.

Bilingual education is a viable alternative for millions of language minorities who could help America maintain its greatness and integrity. It is the duty of all voters, and the privilege of all taxpayers to fully understand the advantages that bilingual education can promote.

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